

NOTES IN A H.

BREAKING CURSES

by MARTIN MARPAGLATE

The kiss was monstrous. Erica's puffy face was tenderised and pink. Her wet lips were like a pair of bloated, bruise-coloured leeches. She had warm, decay flavoured breath and wore the stale scent of dereliction like a swirling repellent cloak.

She loomed in fast, staggering into a crouch across the room. Martin's favourite chair - the television throne from where he could reach his mug, the remote control and the notepads he worked on each night - became an upholstered shackle. His angles of escape were narrowing. If he got up now it would bring his face closer to hers. If he didn't get up he would be outmanoeuvred and at her mercy. He began to rise but her heavy hand planted itself where his vest peeked through his dressing gown. She shoved him down.

Martin, glasses askew, was sickened by the goosebumps thrilling his back as he sank into the armchair. Erica's savoury body odour had engulfed him now and a prolonged "mmm" rumbled from her dank lungs as she closed in.

"C'mon give us a kiss," she growled, throwing flecks of spittle across Martin's pale skin.

"...and our resident culinary expert is going to show us that fried food doesn't have to mean piling on the pounds with a recipe for low fat chocolate chip..."

The television was still on. Martin's hand moved instinctively towards the remote control - it was his tool, his weapon. He was going to put everything on standby.

Why was Erica bursting in on him like this? He wanted to furiously demand that she explain herself but the part of him that would do that was shrinking back into a dark place and silently howling no. A kind of fear was drumming his heart and stealing his breath gasp by gasp. His muscles stopped. Erica's unexpectedly soft body filled his palms.

All kinds of boundaries were being crossed and he was sitting in the middle waiting for the final touch he knew would come. Her lips on his. Her weight on his. He submitted. Get it over with, whatever it is. For a heartbeat they seemed on the brink of melting into one but the poke from her tongue was too much.

It was a small, slippery penetration, receding almost as soon as he was aware of it. Despite the barbarity of the approach Martin could sense her doubt. It was pitiful. No Erica, he thought, none of us understand intimacy. None of us know what to do. Let's just be disgusted.

Erica continued to grind her face into his close-lipped, mocking him with the "mmm" sound of parental kisses. Her saliva was in his mouth. The physical memory of her tongue was on his parted lips. Revulsion finally propelled his arms forwards.

"Get... off... me..." he recited the words like a magic spell with a flourish on the 'me' that was supposed to coincide with one final giant push to launch her backwards. She was too heavy for that. She began to giggle as she let her body settle on his groping hands.

"You're trespassing," he wailed from under her as he realised his retaliation was becoming feeble.

"You told the council I was being anti-sociable so I thought I would be more sociable," Erica huffed and wheezed.

"You kicked the door in..."

"I pushed it..."

"This is assault, get out of here or I'm calling the police."

A furious blush had blossomed on Martin's face. He angrily wiped his fingers across his mouth and examined them as though he expected them to be coated with green slime. She was shambling towards the door, forcing out mean laughter. "Make your mind up, do you want me to be sociable or not," she cackled.

"Anti-social", Martin muttered.

"What?" Erica snapped.

"Just get out!" Martin yelled, more high-pitched than he would have liked and Erica raised one fat finger to him, telling no-one in particular that she was going to buy herself a drink to celebrate.

Things went quiet after the legal proceedings began. In the end Martin went through with it because of who he was. Someone else might have knocked her out - dealt with it on the spot - but he was one of the few in the flats who wasn't like that. He was a writer for God's sake: his masculinity was mostly theoretical. The only way he could accept his impotence when the kiss happened was by pressing for punishment through the law. He stood by his complaint and Erica was charged with assault by means of a kiss. She didn't appear at the first hearing but the case progressed anyway.

Martin was told he might not need to give evidence. The woman from the Crown Prosecution Service on the telephone agreed that it must have been a very upsetting experience and was actually not very funny at all. When Martin put the phone down it struck him that this was an odd thing to say as he had never mentioned it being funny.

"There is another side to this," Martin told his elderly neighbour Mrs Crannock when he knocked on her door to see if she had seen Erica around.

"We used to be quite friendly. I was teaching her to read. I used to help her with her letters and so on but she fell in with those so-called friends of hers and got back on the drink. Such a shame. She could be very pleasant when she was sober but she just took it too far."

"She was a bitch," said Mrs Crannock, hooking a boney finger into her ear and drilling because she found it easier to blame ear wax than deafness for the missing words.

"She could be," Martin nodded, absorbing Mrs Crannock's colourful language without comment. Erica and she had fallen out after Erica jammed an empty plastic cider bottle in her letterbox.

"Have they put her in prison?"

"They wouldn't do that would they?" Martin's eyes darted down the empty corridor.

"Might get her off the drink. Might do her some good. Anyway I've got to go, Deal or No Deal is on."

Martin found himself facing a closed door. As he passed Erica's flat he thought about knocking but then found himself hurrying along. He didn't even want to bump into her by accident. In his imagination at least, she was capable of anything. And that was why she was still in his imagination when Martin settled with his A4 pad and ballpoint pen in front of the television later that evening.

It was a ritual he had enacted every day of his adult life. Sometimes it produced a line, sometimes pages, sometimes nothing, often nothing.

Nothing if there was something good to watch on television, nothing if there was too much noise coming through from next door. There was no noise now.

The television was not even on. Without its light the shadows were closing in.

Martin considered ringing his mother but she was always finding 'proper jobs' for him to do through her friends. Martin had once been forced to tell her newsagent that at 51 he was too old to be a delivery boy. He had expected the newsagent to laugh along with him but instead he got a lecture on earning some money so he didn't have to live off the handouts of a kind old lady like his mother.

"But I'm a writer," Martin had complained, as angry and defensive as a misunderstood adolescent.

"Not unless someone is paying you to do it," was the curt response.

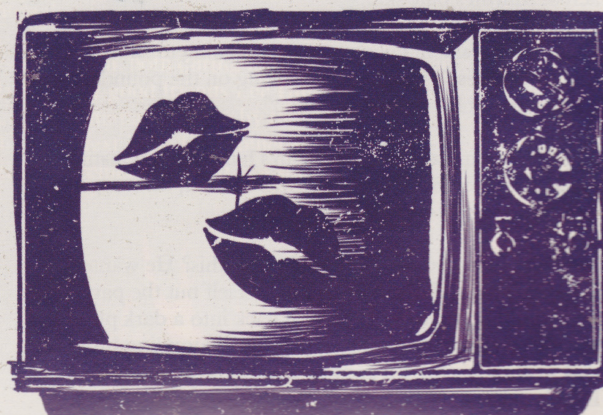
He had been paid for various articles and stories but Martin liked to describe his work as mostly 'non-commercial'. He had decided that if he couldn't experiment at this stage of his career - before success generated an audience with expectations - then when could he? As a self-taught writer he had waded through all kinds of flirtations with different styles and content. He was still not sure he had found his voice. He was not even sure he was supposed to find it. How else was he supposed to explain where all the years had gone? He could finish anything but writing.

"A shadow of fear hung over Semilong that autumn. At sundown the streets rattled with the sound of double-locking. Curtains were pulled closed to ward off unknown silhouettes at the windows. There was a creature that slept by day and prowled by night..."

Martin sighed. What kind of a monster was this supposed to be? A female ogre. He wanted to put a mythical monster on the pavement outside his flat. It sounded ridiculous but what was the difference really? There were real ogres out there. Ugly, violent, unpredictable - call it an ogre, call it Erica. A name is just a word. His wand of ink inscribed a new mythology.

"Those who were alone had the most to fear. Life's slow walkers, the hidiers and the seekers - they became the monster's prey night after night because they lived in the beast's hunting grounds - out on the edge."

Of course Martin knew what he was doing. In California they would call this 'processing'. If he couldn't get Erica out of his head then she might as well do some good while she was in there. Martin had survived an ogre attack and now he was telling the tale. For a moment he considered a book called *When Mythical Creatures Attack* and the potential for an accompanying TV series on the Discovery Channel.



"An indolent youth in a hood kicking stones at a waste bin was suddenly caught in an overpowering embrace. The she-ogre growled as she clawed and clasped, her drooling snarl widening over the young man's terrified face. He pulled back but she lunged and held him long enough to take the idea of a sweet gentle kiss and turn it into a nauseating repugnant humiliation. Her mouth locked on his with a ravenous predatory hunger then she was gone, wailing, raving and cackling. Eventually in the distance came the sound of a door being thumped open, a pause, a cry of revulsion then more of that dreadful, cruel laughter. The youth pulled his hood over his face, dropped to his knees and sobbed quietly."

Martin needed the light on. He reviewed his progress: a story about a female ogre terrorising Semilong by randomly assaulting people with kisses. It was ridiculous. Who was he in this tale? He was the sorcerer who worked secretly during the day to break the curse.

"One day a sorcerer found the ogre and asked her why she behaved this way. She told the sorcerer that she had once been a fairy princess but she was cursed by the potions of the White Lightning Wizard to walk the land as an ogre. The sorcerer took pity on the beast and told her that if she learned to read and write magic words she would no longer be a monster. But he also warned her that the time would come when people would no longer endure her monstering so they would have to work quickly."

The memory of the time Erica scrawled out her name like a five year old as a surprise for Martin still made him smile. She had blushed and couldn't quite look him in the eye or stop grinning. She had been distracted while she was reading out loud and Martin had thought she wanted a drink. Instead she pushed a creased scrap of file paper on to the table with eRicA written on it.

"The sorcerer was pleased with how hard the ogre tried to learn the magic words but every night the potion of the White Lightning Wizard would take hold again. And when Erica's ogre friends came to find her the sorcerer realised, while the ogres howled and raved together in the night, that she would always be a monster and there was nothing he could do. The sorcerer went to the council and told them there was an ogre's lair in Semilong. The people went to the ogre's lair and told her they would drive her away unless she kept the peace."

It was just a kiss but it was nothing like a kiss and it was too late now. Martin knew he would feel guilty. He had known Erica was a volatile character. If he had also known he wouldn't be able to handle that he might never have befriended her. Now it had all turned so sour. He had never had to call in the council for other noisy neighbours. He had never reported an assault to the police before. Perhaps none of that would have happened if he had kept himself to himself. A monster is a monster and cannot be anything else, only bad things come of trying.

The sound of the door latch of Erica's flat was like a squeeze on Martin's heart. She was there. She was coming out. How long had she been there in silence? No television, no plates, no glass breaking, no swearing, no sound at all for weeks until now and those familiar scuffling footsteps in the corridor outside. They hesitated then continued and finally there was a timid knock at the door.

Martin looked around at the scattered pages of Erica the Ogre. He couldn't answer the door. His television was off. He didn't have to answer the door. He just had to wait for her to go. He didn't know what the situation with the court case was. He couldn't answer the door. He would be stupid to answer the door.

His letterbox screeched and something dropped on to the mat. Then the footsteps turned away and the next sound was the fire door at the top of the main stairs. The ogre had gone. Martin found a white envelope on the mat. It was worn and coffee stained and contained a black and white photograph. A small girl with a beaming smile and tissue paper wings was balancing a crown on her head. She held a wand but its tip was bleached out in the bright sunshine of the scene. Looking at it Martin's first impression was of the dazzling happiness, then recognising the mischievous sideways eyes was a shock. It was Erica in a life where people made her costumes and she won prizes. She was grinning like joy could never run out. A long, long time ago, in a place far, far away someone had written on the back of the picture in fountain pen: "My fairy princess Erica, 1959"

Perhaps she just couldn't look at it any more. Perhaps she wanted Martin to know that her life had been different once, that she had been a different person. Perhaps the magic words were just too much for her and this was as close as the sorcerer could get to breaking the curse.



BLANK STARES & CRICKET CLAPS MAGAZINE

WORDS: GARY INGHAM

DESIGN: JON TARRAN



Allen's Market Stall -
Tea, 2 sugars, and a £5 Moby Grape.

TESCO'S DON'T STOCK MOONDOG*

"I DON'T CARE IF I HAVE TO WALK FURTHER; I'LL WALK FURTHER, I'LL PAY MORE, I DON'T REALLY WANT WHAT THE NEW MALL'S GOT, I WANT WHAT THEY GOT IN THAT CORNER STORE..."

JONATHAN RICHMAN 1986

On 17th April just past, there was an attempt at something called 'Independent Record Store Day' to celebrate that dying twinkle in the eye of those bloodied bastions of alternative culture. It did quite well, the broadsheets picked up on it, Mick Jagger reminisced he once went into a record shop, and it stirred some old wallets.

In a typically celebratory Northampton, Nick Hamlyn, owner of the last but-one full time record shop in town, Pied Piper, decided this would be the day to look up from his laptop for the first time in five years to close his doors forever after 24 years business. Well, I had to have a look at the corpse whilst it was still fresh. I spent the afternoon riffling through boxes with the hungry clammy fingered rack-flicking of the solitary sonic adventurer, sifting for that last hidden flake of gold, at apocalypse looter price structuring, somewhere deep behind this vast maze of 'No Parlez' by Paul Young.

**A CREDIT CARD
AND A MOUSE
CLICK CAN ONLY
LEAD TO AN
OVERDRAFT &
PORNOGRAPHY**

The conclusion, other than a very satisfying sack of who-knows-what-the-hell-this-is-but-it-was-only-50p was this: **RECORD SHOPS ARE BRILLIANT, YEAH?**

What's the most intrusive question on your past - "When did you lose your virginity?", or "What was the first record you bought?" Answer: the latter, because it was way more memorable and twice as sordid.

A 12" LP is an artistic possession. A 45rpm single is that sweetest confection that you know for sure only you will ever own and truly understand. The vinyl junkie is just that. The record fix is required beyond all things. It is all things. The local record store is the gateway of escape for the damned to concepts and cultures of all kinds.

They don't stock Moondog in Tesco's, I've asked. They think it's a CBeebies DVD.

The passing of the great locals Spinadisc and Sonic Boom are part of the slip-slide decline of the Independent trader everywhere. Things move on, surely rightly so, new options are many, and blogs such as Hype Machine offer a million short-cuts to the diamond mine, but the thrill of it all is lost in the ease and cheapness somehow. Spotify, bitTorrent and iTunes are our virtual shops now. No musk and dust.

MP3 players have brought a mass of silent blank faced individual music listeners. Not everyone can be listening to Leonard Cohen surely? - despite the looks on their faces. Isn't music at its best as a shared experience? You're not going to remember where you were when you downloaded your new favourite bands 1st single, because you were where you always are, in your armchair, wheezing, alone. A credit card and a mouse click can only lead to overdrafts and pornography. Yet downloading is just a cog in the growing machinery of the problem, the major rent hikes of landlords and councils have been a funeral toll to small business, these land-barons are squeezing art, love and rebellion from the high streets for every last trickle of green and silver blood, leaving no place for a trip to the local for a good old fashioned communal thumbing session.

Well, maybe so, maybe no, they're still out there, and still here, just, if you may be interested...

Spun Out on Gold Street is on traditionally record shop premises since the 60's, being the site of the old John Lever shop, today you can pop in and buy some new electro vinyl releases, a mixer, and some red hair dye, all in one shop, **WE SHALL OVERCOME!!!** ►



Bang Bang records Pete Riley -
Shack full o' racks, chopper on the block.

**HUNGRY CLAMMY FINGERED RACK-FLICKING
OF THE SOLITARY SONIC ADVENTURER...**

Spiral Archive, run by this very publication's own Alex Novak, has been criss-crossing town centre premises for years, but is settled snugly for now with the biggest hoard of 2nd hand LP's in NN1 on St.Michael's Road just by this very publication's own store.

'Allen's' weekly out-posting on his Market Square stall has endured for 22 years. He has the thousand yard stare of the true believer to the cause. He always has something cheap and worthwhile and keeps his hard-sell in check, us average sleeve-flickers are all stocked up on snobbery already thanks.

Sidewinder records on Wellingborough Road is the core at the heart of a thriving hip-hop underworld which should be adventured, and which shall, in these pages very soon.

And finally, fresh air, with the very spangly new (yes, NEW! EAT THAT NAYSAYING RETRO-VISIONISTS!) Bang Bang Records in The Fishmarket, Bradshaw Street (Thursday - Saturday). A smashing

plywood shack full o' racks of all kinds o' finds, with a deck all ready to test wares on. Owner Pete Riley has really stuck his chopper on the block opening up for you people so maybe pop down and have a butchers if you're not too busy youtubin' clips of vinyl records eh?

Despite SuBo's greatest efforts, I don't believe the fat lady has sung for record shop lovers. The love is too deep, the investment too profound. Even if it's just a stack of battered LP's laid on a blanket in the street by 2020, we shall find them, peruse silently, stroke chin, and ask for a deal. ■

Visit online for info on how to reach onfoot:

www.spunout.net
www.myspace.com/sidewinderrecords
www.myspace.com/spiralarchiverecords
<http://stores.ebay.co.uk/Bang-Bang-Records-Northampton>

Baron Von Novak stands guard at Spiral Archive.



PLUGGERY!

NEW-ISH COCHLEA BOTHERERS FROM STRICTLY WITHIN COUNTY BORDERS...

DROOL

Insightfully describing themselves as being "leaps and bounds-cheap ass sounds", the Parker brothers and friend, barely out of school, flail about hopelessly, squealing in daydreams of mad dogs in day-glo fields. They actually look a little bit like mad dogs. This is not a criticism. They also wear dresses and make a hellish racket. It's sonic vomit. Lap it up.

www.myspace.com/droolarecool

NEWISLANDS

Lead singer David Jones was formerly of The Departure, who had a couple of Top 30 hits in 2005, before quickly deflating after a record company backstabbing. Jones has lost a lot of the Bowie affectations that grated in his last guise, and his new crew are chasing the latest neon flashed cutting edge all the way around Camden. Of course, the cutting edge now is fairly similar to what it was in 1984, but that shouldn't stop you dancing. You can only hope they don't get lost poncing around Hoxton hoping NME come sniffing for blood, because that tends to end badly. The wallowing synth-pop demo's of 'Out Of Time' and 'Don't Stop Dreaming' have been getting them noticed; watch out for them at your local gastro fashionista.

www.myspace.com/newislands



STEVIE JONES

The cul de sac of the derivative local singer-songwriter is a godless place. Drab and seemingly endless. The fact that there are probably half a dozen people in their post code who can do the very same thing, and possibly better, but keep it to themselves, doesn't deter them, they continue unyielding. I found listening to these songs as enjoyable as stubbing a toe, falling over into a dogs doo-dah on a busy high street, a big one, then sucking a lemon, biting tinfoil, and having root canal surgery. Yes, all at the same time somehow, that's what's happened here.

www.myspace.com/steviejonesmusic

THE PLUTO GANG

Northampton band-hoppers Matthew King and Nic Willes have teamed up with a couple of chums to form a sunbleached collective of West Coast viced scrapplehaired 3-piece country harmony skronks. They've quickly chugged out what sounds like a bunch of songs made after they decided to leave their Biffy Clyro collection at home and spend a hazy day out up the Canyon sucking chong with Buffalo Springfield. Here's hoping for a long strange trip.

www.myspace.com/iammatthewking

MARK REFOY'S EFFECTS PEDAL CORNER...

Sooner or later, if you mess about recording music, you will almost certainly want to sound like an alien robot and/or, start a Peter Frampton styled side project, and that's when you will need the Digitech Talker. Its like a synthesized vocoder or a talkbox made simple and without all the gubbins that made Frampton's teeth fall out. You plug a microphone into it and your instrument of choice, that being guitar for me, sing into the mic and play some notes, and this box combines the two into an output signal that makes you sound like Metal Mickey. It has half a dozen settings on this lovely stainless steel stomp box called things like NuVo, Tazmania and Alien, all slightly mental variations on a vocoder effect.

It's discontinued now, and if you want one it might set you back about £200. To be honest, I hardly ever use it, and it takes an age to set up, bit of a hassle really, and since the producer of 'Believe' by Cher used one on her vocals I've naturally lost interest in it a bit. Still, it does double up as a nice Sun-Ra style mask, look!

Slipstream's 'Out Of Orbit
Vol.1 & 2' are available now.



BEYOND THE NORM

**THE ROMAN POET VIRGIL COMPOSED THE WARNING
"DON'T TRUST GREEKS BEARING GIFTS".
RECENTLY THE WARNING TO THE GREEKS HAS BEEN
"DON'T TRUST THE IMF BEARING GIFTS".**

BY NORMAN ADAMS

GREEK WORKERS

have been at the centre of the global battle to decide which class will pay for the economic crisis. The IMF's medicine of "structural adjustment" - loans with conditions such as cuts and privatisation is spreading from the world's poorest to the next tier of the poor. The policies inflicted, mainly on the Global South in the 1980s, have recently been enforced with disastrous effect in Lithuania and Hungary. It appears now they are to be imposed at the centre of Europe. These events in the olive belt are making waves that could be lapping our shores as we all get caught on the horns of a Greek dilemma and the storms brewing in Spain and Portugal.

As we in Britain have seen the General Election unravel, it seems apparent in the mist of our own economic dilemmas that all the parties have been prevaricating - because of their collective wish to get the election out of the way before being straight with the people as to the magnitude of the cuts they will be trying to inflict on the public.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS), in an audit of the main parties' economic plans, said all three had been "strikingly reticent" on post-election cuts. The IFS said '87% of Labour cuts are not spelled out, 82% of the Tories' plans are unspecified and 74% of Lib Dems have not yet been detailed.'

THE SNP LEADER

Alex Salmond highlighted the findings of the IFS audit, calling it the 'Iceberg election'. Mr Salmond said: "I've been calling this the iceberg election because the London parties have been determined to hide the full nature of their cuts agenda throughout the course of this campaign." He continued "They've made visible only a mere fraction of the plans that they have, leaving out the billions of pounds additional cuts below the surface... Like an iceberg, it is that enormous bit that remains unseen that poses the greatest risk and threatens the greatest damage." Mr. Salmond went on to say: "The reality of their cuts agenda has been their shared secret, their joint cover-up. It is a question that each of them do not want to answer."

It will be much more, not a few distant cuts in public spending, or efficiency savings that will erase a consultant here and a fringe project there.

The Lib-Dems demanded "savage cuts in public spending", as Nick Clegg put it, whether they are in a coalition government with Labour or with the Tories. However, in Northampton, the campaign led by "Save Our Public Services" has aimed to build a coalition of trade unionists, socialists, campaigners, and activists to resist and prevent the planned attacks on services, wages, and conditions.

In response, it is our business to mobilise against them, industrially, on the streets, with mass demonstrations, and through putting an ideological alternative. I'm hoping for a clear understanding of the need for a collective mobilisation across the Labour movement when the new government comes to attack people's jobs and services.

I wonder how working people will react to having benefits cut, public-service wages squeezed, and services slashed, while the rich rake it in? In 2008 or even 2009, many workers may have felt that everyone was suffering in the economic crisis and that it made sense to take a bit of the slack. The Sunday Times reported on 25th April, 2010...

"The collective wealth of the 1,000 multimillionaires in the 2010 Sunday Times Rich List has climbed to £335.5 billion, up £77.265 billion on 2009... a 29.9% increase". This begs the question - Should we be taxing the rich more?

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL - LEGAL GAG AND FASHION RULES

Anyone who has been reading the previous editions of Dodgem Logic will know we have been campaigning around the issue of the removal of Wardens from Sheltered Housing.



Last year we were filmed for BBC Current Affairs - a Panorama program discussing the issues surrounding sheltered housing in the UK. More specifically, it investigated the way the warden system has changed since funding regulations were altered in 2003. We also wrote about the solicitor Yvonne Hossack supporting the tenants' and how local authority had attempted to have her taken off the register. The national press noted that Ms Hossack's supporters had worn shirts with "we love our solicitor" and "beat the bully" written on them.

Northampton Borough Council has now taken the step of taking out an injunction on Edward 'Teddy' McNabb. Local papers report that McNabb was placed under the temporary injunction following a hearing at Northampton County Court yesterday. Mohammed Rahman, prosecuting, said staff and councillors at the authority had been "intimidated" by regular emails from McNabb, aged 56, accusing them of collusion and referring to former leader Tony Woods (Lib Dem, St David's) and chief executive David Kennedy as "scum".

The council wrote to one of the supporters: "We are aware that in the past that you have worn clothing, with the term 'bully' written on your shirt or top. Any such clothing worn by you, we will deem this as a breach of the injunction." [Northampton Council by the way is Liberal Democrat controlled, so it will be interesting to see the future outcome.]

Judge Alison Hampton, hearing the case, appealed for McNabb to "find something better to do". She said: "I can't order you to love the borough council, but I can order you to stop annoying and harassing them."

The report goes on to say "McNabb has spent several years campaigning against the council as a result of cuts to warden services in sheltered housing complexes in the town. He said he had been provoked into sending the emails, and added: "When a dog has been kicked long enough, he will bite back.""

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

recently circulated "The Council commenced injunction proceedings against Mr McNabb who has, for some time now, communicated with both Councillors and Officers, in a manner which is offensive and abusive. Whilst Mr McNabb is a citizen of the Borough and is entitled to hold us to account for the services we provide, his approach and behaviour has been unacceptable and has caused distress to those on the receiving end of his communications. Mr MacNabb was warned about his behaviour on a number of occasions but to no avail - hence the reason we had to take formal legal action."

As someone who as worked with Teddy McNabb on this campaign, I find the whole thing something of a farce - the council solicitor has taken action that includes all 47 Northampton councillors - BUT what the solicitor had failed to do was ask them all - the first thing a lot of the councillors knew about the injunction was after the event.

One Independent Councillor told the council solicitor "I will not have this Council acting for me without consulting me or seeking my approval." And "I am instructing the Council to inform the Court that I as an Individual member want my name removed from this action and injunction with immediate effect"

CLLR TONY CLARK STATES ON HIS BLOG

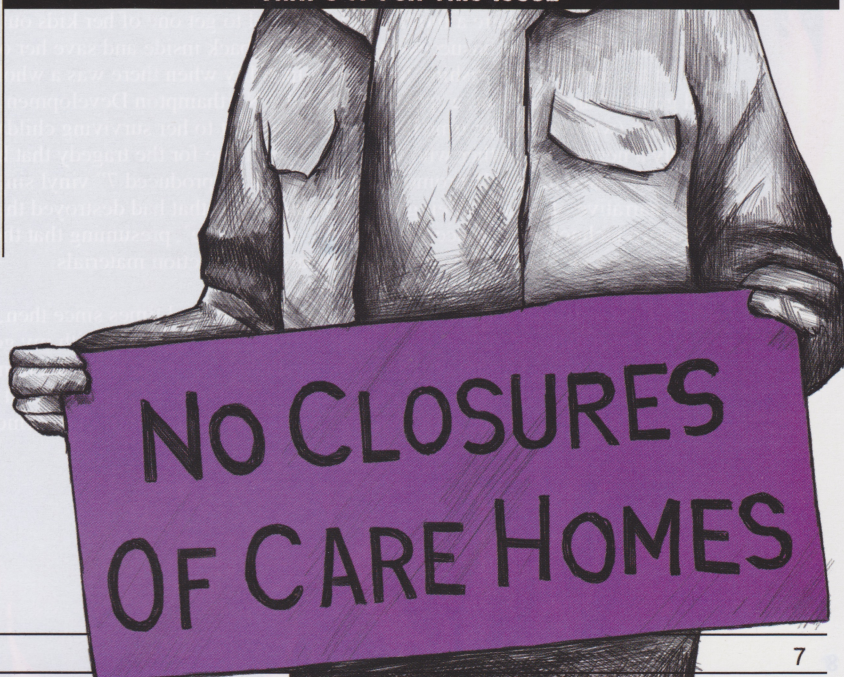
"I received an email from the Borough solicitor informing me that an injunction had been taken out in my name (and every other Cllr) against a pensioner who was deemed to be harassing council staff and other members of Northampton Borough Council. The injunction forbids any contact between the pensioner and any Councillor or staff member without us first giving our permission for any such contact... I was livid!! Putting to one side for a minute what the individual may or may not have done, what right has the Liberal Democrat led authority to take court action in my name without my authority?"

Residents 4 Residents will continue to support Teddy .We are questioning the reasoning of the Judge Alison Hampton, for McNabb to "find something better to do". We cannot think of a better use of this man's time than the efforts he makes for the elderly.

In the mean time, Teddy will continue to receive letters asking him to 'consider carefully the items of clothing you wear. We are aware that in the past that you have worn clothing, with the term "bully" written on your shirt or top. Any such clothing worn by you, we will deem this as a breach of the injunction.'

We would like to remind you once again that there is a live injunction in force, and 'should there be any action committed by you or by someone on your behalf [i.e. wearing these offensive t-shirts] amounts to a breach of the injunction... Should you be guilty of breaching the injunction, you will be in contempt of court and as such, you could be fined, sent to prison or both'.

THAT'S IT FOR THIS ISSUE



EASTBOUND AND DOWN

Having temporarily exhausted his bile with regard to the wilful neglect of his birthplace in Spring Boroughs, Alan Moore turns his attentions to another former stretch of home turf, this time in the peeling penal colonies of the Eastern District.

The first I ever knew of the Eastern District was before it had a name, in the late 'sixties or the early 'seventies, when it was just a rumour that my dad had heard at work: a local farmer had apparently been tipped off by a colleague with council connections that the scrubland up past Weston Favell would be needed for a planned extension of the town some five or ten years down the line. It seems the farmer was advised to buy the land for next to nothing so that when the council bought it from him a short while thereafter he'd be looking at a profit margin in the millions, and would hopefully remember the council associate who'd given him this valuable information in the first place. This was just something that my old man told me over tea, gruffly, and between mouthfuls of masticated sausage. At the time, it barely registered.

Only a few years later, around 1977, me and my then-wife had our first daughter on the way and were residing at a two-room flat in Colwyn Road; were therefore happy to accept a nice three-bedroom house up on the new estates at Maidencastle, a kind of geostationary satellite held in thrall by the greater mass of Blackthorn. Strangely enough, around that time I was acquainted with a guy I'd known from my ill-fated stint at the Northampton Grammar School, an artist who had even done some work for the first never-to-be-published issue of my aborted 1975 fanzine, Dodgem Logic. While at the time I was aware that his father was Gordon Redfern, a flamboyant and left-leaning architect who had allegedly helped to conceive the well-known CND 'peace' symbol, I somehow never realised that this was the Gordon Redfern who had been responsible for the design of all the frame-built houses on Blackthorn and Maidencastle until I perused last issue's splendid piece by urban legend Gary Mills. I didn't know that the estates were styled after New Jersey's Radburn model, nor was I aware that when that scheme would later be exported to Australia it would create a suburb that "became the centre of drugs; it became the centre of violence and, eventually, the police refused to go into it. It was hell."

My own impressions at the time were nowhere near as well-informed, but no less sceptical. The winding paths and bland green spaces conjured nothing but a reaching emptiness and seemed designed to tranquilise the restless population like environmental Valium. Meanwhile the buggy-trundling young mothers who had been condemned to trudge those paths or simply cut a grassless 'pathway of desire' across those spaces were to all appearances dosed up on the real thing, with their suspiciously well-behaved babies nodding out on Phenergan, the paediatric equivalent. I eyed up the 'play area' in the centre of our court (a bruising, abstract concrete crocodile), looked at the shadowy underpasses and at the old people's flats positioned centrally so that their neighbours could look after them, and I decided that I didn't want to still be living there in ten years time. All of those chemically-coshed infants would be thirteen or fourteen by then, stuck in an isolated and neglected gulag with only a concrete crocodile for entertainment. The lights down in the underpasses would be broken; probably only infrequently replaced. The elderly, it seemed to me, would find their centralised locations only made them more convenient targets. It would all get very ugly, very rapey, very quickly. You could stand on Cherry Lodge Road and could see the future as it rumbled down the tracks towards you, black and smoking.

Problems with the actual housing rapidly became apparent: a foot-long tongue of blue flame would shoot out of the central heating vent whenever we got up the nerve to switch it on. Given that all the houses were constructed out of plywood, it was possibly inevitable that there would soon be a rash of horrifying fires across the Eastern District. I remember one case where a mother had managed to get one of her kids out of their blazing home and had been badly burned and injured in an unsuccessful effort to go back inside and save her other offspring, who did not survive. As I recall, at the inquiry, not wishing to admit culpability when there was a whole estate full of identical dwellings that could go up at any moment, a spokesman for the Northampton Development Corporation, suggested that as the woman in question (who was at the time donating a skin graft to her surviving child) was not married to her partner, she was probably a neglectful mother who was largely to blame for the tragedy that had befallen her. This was around the time the NDC released their self-promotional Trevor Horn-produced 7" vinyl single, Energy From Northampton, with its stirring narrative of aliens 'fleeing from a neutron-war that had destroyed their home' and looking for 'a place with all the modern technology; a place where they could be free', presuming that their new home wasn't destroyed by its own central heating system and cheapjack cardboard construction materials.

I've returned to Blackthorn and the Eastern District several times since then, both during its Dodge City period when it seemed to be mostly lit by burning police cars, and more recently with my good friends Lee Hutchinson and Influence, investigating the dividing-up of the Bellinge estate as pizza slices with a human topping by the crime-prevention fencing that effectively transforms the district into Gaza, NN3. Join me next issue for another walk down bad memory lane and a look at where the area's current funding is going. Until then, remember: East is a state of mind.